

Now I want to summarize the new vaccine guidance for those who have disorders of their immune system.

Last Friday, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and their Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that people whose immune systems are moderately to severely compromised receive an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at least four weeks after an initial two-dose mRNA series.

With the Delta variant surging and cases of COVID-19 increasing significantly across the US, an additional dose could help prevent serious and possibly life-threatening COVID-19 in immunocompromised people. This is not really considered to be a booster – it is really meant to provide opportunity for those in the immunocompromised group to mount an sufficient initial immune response. So that third dose is really just helping them complete a series.

The eligible population is estimated to be approximately 3% of the U.S. adult population, and they include some very focused groups. People who've had:

- active treatment for solid tumor and hematologic cancers
- A solid-organ transplant and taking immunosuppressive therapy

- CAR-T-cell or hematopoietic stem cell transplant (within 2 years of transplantation or taking immunosuppression therapy)
- People born with a primary immunodeficiency state (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- People with advanced or untreated HIV infection (fortunately quite rare these days since most people have identified and gotten their infection under treatment)
- Active treatment with steroids high-dose corticosteroids (if they are on prednisone more than 20 mg per day), or a host of other immune modulating or biologic agents that can be immunosuppressive.

You may still ask yourself, am I in any of these groups? So it's very important that if you still have questions about your own status, talk with your own health care provider about your medical condition or treatments, and whether getting an additional dose of vaccine is appropriate for you.

It is important to note that there are people who are NOT included in this list. An additional dose is only recommended for individuals who are moderately or severely immunocompromised — it is not recommended that you take an additional doses if you are in any other population at this time.

This population includes all of those people we used to call “high risk conditions” when we were ramping up our vaccine

strategies – conditions such as heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. We are, however, getting signals from the Biden administration that planning is underway in the next 1-2 months regarding boosters for the entire adult broader population.

Third shots can be obtained from your own clinician if they are enrolled in the vaccine program, over 260 practices are part of the program, and over 130 are administering vaccines. You can get them from pharmacy chains, and from pop-up sites. Vermont will use a self-attestation model at pharmacies and state vaccine administration sites. You will not have to have documentation of your health status.

Keep in mind, the current CDC expectation is that the additional dose should be the same vaccine product as the initial two-dose messenger RNA COVID-19 vaccine series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna).

And if you received a dose of J&J, this announcement does not pertain to you. There is not enough data at this time to determine whether immunocompromised people who received Johnson & Johnson's Janssen (J&J/Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine also have an improved antibody response following an additional dose of the same vaccine.